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REMOTE CONTROL REALTOR

3 BEDROOMS, 2 BATH — 1 ROBOT

Wave of technology: Agents have a new way to take the hassle out of coordinating showing times with prospective renters



PHOTOS BY DAI SUGANO — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Zenplace agent Rabia Levy shows, via robot, a two-bedroom home in Santa Clara to a potential tenant, Gilbert Serrano, of San Jose. The remote-control robots, named Zenny, are used by Zenplace to guide prospective renters on tours.

By Marisa Kendall
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SANTA CLARA » When Gilbert Serrano opened the door of his potential dream home, a modern, two-bedroom rental on Karen Drive, he was surprised to be greeted not by a real estate agent, but by a robot.

The sleek, 3-foot-tall bot whirled up to the door on small wheels. “Hello, welcome. You must be Gilbert.” An iPad mounted on the machine displayed an agent’s smiling face.

Online extra: To see a video of how the robot helps show a home, visit us at MERCURYNEWS.COM

These robots, rolled out last summer in the Bay Area by high-tech property management startup Zenplace, are intended to take the hassle out of coordinating showing times between agents and prospective renters. They’re just one piece of the new wave of technology that’s changing the way we buy, sell and rent homes, as platforms such as Zillow, **ROBOT » PAGE 8**



Serrano directs questions to Zenny, run by Rabia Levy. Zenplace CEO Rahul Mewawalla says the company wants to make renting a home as simple as summoning an Uber.

POLL SHOWS SCHISM

State, Bay Area differ on gas tax

Most voters support repeal, but jammed, crumbling roadways have region singing different tune

By Erin Baldassari

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If it were up to Bay Area voters, efforts to repeal the state’s recently enacted gas tax increase would die a quick death. But the Bay Area is not like the rest of the state, a new poll released Thursday found.

Statewide, 52 percent of likely voters said they would repeal the tax — which added 12 cents to the cost of a gallon of gasoline and 20 cents per gallon of diesel — compared with 43 percent who want to keep it in place. It was a different story in the Bay Area, where 60 percent of respondents want to keep the tax — and the \$5 billion it’s expected to raise annually, mostly for road repairs — while 34 percent want to see it gone.

Supporters of the tax, which took effect Nov. 1, say the funds are desperately needed to address a \$130 billion backlog of deferred roadway maintenance needs across the

STATE VS. BAY AREA

52%

Percentage of likely voters statewide who would repeal the gas tax

60%

Percentage of likely Bay Area voters who would keep the gas tax

GAS TAX » PAGE 8

DO TOOLS PROMOTE BIAS?

Suit alleges age discrimination in Facebook ads

Plaintiffs charge employers targeting younger workers on the popular site

By Levi Sumagaysay and Queenie Wong
Staff writers

Companies are routinely using Facebook ads to target younger job seekers — and now that practice has Amazon, T-Mobile, Cox Communications and others facing a lawsuit charging that they discriminate against older workers.

Three workers and the Communications Workers of America (CWA) are asking that such practices be declared in violation of “various state laws prohibiting age discrimination in employment,” according to a lawsuit filed Wednesday in federal court in San Francisco. The plaintiffs also name “similarly situated employers and employment agencies” — including Facebook.

The lawsuit is already making employers think twice about targeting job ads at specific

AGE » PAGE 8

EMERGENCY SESSION VOTE

UN rejects Trump’s Israel decision

In a stunning rebuke, 128 countries voted to reject the U.S. declaration

By Carol Morello and Ruth Eglash
Washington Post

The U.N. General Assembly on Thursday overwhelmingly passed a measure rejecting the Trump administration’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, a stunning rebuke of a U.S. decision that allies and adversaries alike warned would undermine prospects for peace.

Despite U.S. threats to cut aid to countries that backed the resolution

and even funding for the United Nations itself, 128 countries voted in favor of the measure. Only nine countries — including the United States and Israel — voted against it. An additional 35 abstained, and 21 were absent.

The vote in a rare emergency session was a public reproach of an administration that stands alone in the world in recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, a status other governments say should be left

U.N. » PAGE 7



SPENCER PLATT — GETTY IMAGES

“This vote will be remembered,” said Nikki Haley, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, after the U.N. vote.

Online extra: For the latest political news from the nation and around the world, visit MERCURYNEWS.COM

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Congress OKs temporary spending bill to avoid shutdown



WEATHER » B6
Mostly sunny
H: 57-60 L: 36-38

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